

**Private Land / Public Wildlife Advisory Council
MEETING SUMMARY**

Thursday, June 19, 2014, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Friday, June 20, 2014, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Sleep Inn, Miles City, Montana

Council Members Present:

Joe Perry (Chairman), Dwayne Andrews, Chris King, Jack Billingsley, Rod Bullis, Lisa Flowers, Denley Loge, Kevin Chappell, (DNRC), Pat Gunderson (BLM)

FWP Staff Present:

Jeff Hagener, Alan Charles and Joe Weigand

Facilitation Team:

Mary Ellen Wolfe and Allen Sangster (Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy)

MEETING SUMMARY:

This document summarizes the Private Land Public Wildlife Advisory Council (Council) meeting convened on Thursday, June 19 and Friday, June 20, 2014. The summary focuses on agenda items, discussion, and action items related to each agenda item. Meeting presentations and handouts are attached.

Thursday, June 19, 2014

AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME AND TRAPLINE REPORTS

Joe Perry (Chair) opened the meeting, spoke briefly about clearing the air, and asked members to share their Trapline reports from the past month. General themes that emerged from the reports included:

- Several Council members noted that when they have asked people about HB454 they learn that no one really knows anything about it. Some people don't like the idea of no cap. Some think that 1:1 is too generous.
- Block Management comes up frequently in a number of Trapline conversations. Some people like it and some don't. Some landowners think the fees should be increased. Some think there are too many hunters. Some landowners need early and late hunts to achieve their objectives. Block management may work for more people than HB454. The Council needs to spend more time on BMP.
- The county roads issue needs to be addressed. Many people are interested in this issue. Old roads on maps from long ago are being used by people as RS2477 roads.
- The Devil's Kitchen model is still of interest to Council members and they would like to hear more about it. Alan Charles asked Cory Lecker, FWP Biologist to help develop a one page synopsis of it, but was unable to accomplish that by the June meeting. Some Council members indicated they would like to hear from some of the landowners involved.
- "Issues divide us, values unite us" was reiterated again. Since people get their information from lots of different places, one Council member tries to steer people to the PL/PW web page for information where they can read the Council's meeting summaries.
- A CAC member in Region IV liked the Corner Crossing idea.

Staff Note: There was some additional discussion regarding whether member's wanted to discuss Devil's Kitchen at a later date. Transferable tags were mentioned and dismissed for lack of interest. Later in the meeting, Council members indicated there is a desire to discuss 'what can outfitters do' to expand access at a future meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 2: TAKING STOCK

The Council was asked to pause at this mid-way point to reflect on what has been accomplished to date, to examine what needs to be done at this meeting and to clarify what lies ahead, in terms of schedule and outputs.

Mary Ellen briefly reviewed what's been accomplished by the Council in their five meetings since their first meeting in January.

- Heard informational presentations by multiple speakers on Hunting Access Data and Tools; the Block Management Program; stakeholder perspectives; Regional Access Coordinator perspectives; the License Advisory Committee and other topics.
- Identified and prioritized issues and options for consideration and possible action.
- Drafted six goals and 20 preliminary recommendations which now need to be carefully examined to make sure each one captures the Council's intent and is clear, concise, compelling and actionable.

This meeting involved close examination of Council goals and preliminary recommendations to prepare refined draft items for review and approval at the next Council meeting (August). At that meeting, the revised DRAFT Recommendations will be adopted for public review and comment.

Alan Charles described the future Council schedule:

- Late August – September will be a 45-day public review and comment period. Comments will be compiled and provided to Council members prior to an October meeting, which could possibly be conducted as a video-conference, depending on the substance of public comments and the need for additional work on final recommendations.
- October - Refine and finalize Council recommendations for insertion into the PL/PW Report which will be presented to the Governor, Legislature and FWP by January 5, 2015.
- October 2014 -June 2015: FWP will seek periodic input from the PL/PW Council regarding proposed actions, to include possible revision of statute, ARM or program policy, for addressing various issues raised in the Block Management Program audit. This may include a need for assembling Council work groups to address specific tasks, members responding to questionnaires, and possibly scheduling periodic meetings to conduct formal work sessions, etc.

AGENDA ITEM 3: WORK SESSION—WORKING GROUP REPORTS AND NEW COMBINED LICENSE

Throughout the remainder of the day, the PL/PW Council worked to evaluate and refine their draft goals and preliminary recommendations. The product of the PL/PW Council's extended work session is Attachment A to this document.

AGENDA ITEM 4: MORNING PUBLIC COMMENT

- Kelly Radue, Miles City area resident, thanked the Council for their time and work. He shared his perspective that wildlife is a public resource. He charges hunters nothing to use his property.
- John Wilkinson, Miles City area rancher and part-time outfitter, said that he believes the Corner Crossing initiative will fail without sideboards, for it will put too much pressure on the Department of FWP. He also said that in regards to the HB454 proposed bull permits, until such time they are transferable, he feels the program will not have participation.

AGENDA ITEM 5: WORK SESSION—EVALUATE AND REFINE GOALS AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS INTO DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Following lunch, the Council continued their work session, evaluating and refining their draft goals and preliminary recommendations which are available as Attachment A.

AGENDA ITEM 5: P.M. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Chip Dye, Alzada resident, shared thoughts about the Block Management Program, and public lands. He questioned whether he could sponsor more than one family member under the Home to Hunt program and was told that there is no limit on the number of family members who can be sponsored.
- Dean Seifert, Miles City area resident, spoke about a local Block Management Area in the Pine Hills where he did not agree with the BMA rules. He also mentioned he is familiar with a corner crossing incident in Wyoming that resulted in legal action.
- Mark Robbins, a rancher from Lewistown, expressed concern that there were not more landowners around the PL/PW Council table. He said all stakeholders are to be represented on the Council but he is concerned that until more landowners are added, the Council won't know what landowners want and need. He said that the Council needs to understand why landowners shut down their land and include these people at the table. Regarding the proposed Corner Crossing efforts, he called it a good idea, as another access program. Regarding the Home to Hunt program, he said that raising the fee doesn't mean the tags will sell out.

AGENDA ITEM 6: WRAP-UP AND ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.

Friday, June 20, 2014

AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME

Joe Perry (Chair) opened the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 2: WORK SESSION—REVIEW AND REFINE WORK ACCOMPLISHED YESTERDAY, CLARIFY NEXT STEPS

The Council completed their review of draft Goals and Preliminary Recommendations (See Attachment A)

The accomplishments of the previous day were reviewed and action items were clarified with deadlines. *(See All Meeting Follow-up Items and Tasks on page 7 of this document)*

Alan Charles presented preliminary upland game bird hunter data recently gathered through the Resident Hunter Access Satisfaction Survey being conducted by Mike Lewis and FWP Responsive Management Unit (RMU). Mike presented the data from deer, elk, and antelope hunters during the May meeting. Alan explained that all data would be made available to the public as soon as it has been finalized by the RMU.

Alan then led the Council through a brief work session focused on trying to get input from Council members regarding various elements of a fundamental hunting access planning question that has been posed to them repeatedly since their first meeting through a “Mind Map” document (see Attachment B). While it is critical for the Council to consider this same question as they conduct their own work, their feedback may also help the agency as FWP begins developing a Comprehensive Hunting Access Plan over the next few months.

The question is: HOW MUCH hunting access of what TYPE is needed WHERE and WHEN to accomplish WHAT?

Using the “Mind Map” diagram as a visual aid, Alan asked Council members to provide feedback regarding each of the elements of this question – Council members’ input reflected in bullets under each question.

1. HOW MUCH hunting access is needed?

- Number of hunter days is standard, it’s easy to measure and most folks understand it.
- Hunter satisfaction is a good measure.
- Number of acres is important and it would be good to tie it to quality, though this can be tough to measure as it is in the eye of the beholder.

- Access points and acres. For example, it would be measurable to say that we will go from 2 million acres of inaccessible public lands this year to 1 million of inaccessible lands next year.
- Quality hunts, though this is not always related to greater acreages.
- Number of cooperators: rural-urban interaction and tools to measure satisfaction
- Why do hunters drop out of BMP?

2. What TYPE of access is needed?

- Over-objective ungulate species
- Ask landowners what type of access they want to provide
- Type of weapon? Archery is a rapidly increasing constituency, should more resources be put to this constituency?
- Other types, e.g. 8 types of private land access management systems?
- Any thoughts on working with other entities? E.g. is there a way for FWP to work with landowners who outfit?
- The Block Management Program is fine, flexible and a high priority – should focus on that type of program.
- Disabled access, the numbers may be down in this category but more resources need to be given to it.

3. WHERE is access needed?

- Need to know where you get the biggest bang for the buck. Need a baseline to compare to.

4. WHEN is access needed?

- One Council member asked what the goal is for developing an access plan. He is still not clear that the Department has a goal.
- *(Staff note: Time constraints ended this session early).*

AGENDA ITEM 3: REGION 7 BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM –Travis Muscha

Travis Muscha, Region 7 Access Coordinator, reported on the area's Block Management Program.

- 326 cooperators
- 276 block management areas
- 2.5 million acres enrolled
- 60,000 hunter days
- 34,000 hunters
- 928 hunters returned comment cards showing 90% satisfaction rate with the BMP
- Post-season cooperator assessments on a 60% return, showed 97% satisfaction with the program and 95% satisfaction with hunters.

Travis emphasized that since 76% of all land in Region 7 is private, the BMP is extremely important in this part of Montana.

Travis described how the BMP is implemented in Region 7, which has the only full-time BMP administrative assistant in the state. . He described the preparation of the Access Guides and Landowner packets and use of the large conference room throughout the fall. Many hunters come to the office to get maps, because Region 7 does not mail out maps, although they are available online. Hunters can get up to 5 maps and 5 cooperator contacts. There are 9 Hunting Access Technicians (HATs) who play extremely important roles throughout the hunting season, taking reservations on 15 properties, patrolling for compliance, posting and replacing signs, etc. When the hunting season ends, the HATs move to town and the data compilation begins. Two landowner appreciation dinners are held each year, one in Miles City where over 200 people commonly attend, and one in Glendive, which is somewhat smaller.

Council members commented on the notable success of the BMP in Region 7. They asked if the Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Program comes up in conversations and they heard that not many people are aware of it. The HATs in Region 7 have been working at it for a long-time and they do it because they love it. There are some concerns about low game numbers in the region and fortunately, the BMP allows for flexibility so that the number of hunters can be limited. This flexibility is important.

AGENDA ITEM 4: FOOD FOR THOUGHT—ANOTHER IDEA – Gary Hammond and John Ensign

Gary Hammond and John Ensign introduced a potential new program--the Hunter Heritage Partnership (HHP) Program, for Council consideration. The proposed program aims to develop a new hunting access program with county-level leadership and participation. The objectives of the program are to: (1) restore a sense of community between rural Montana, landowners, and sportsmen while maintaining Montana's hunting heritage; and (2) to provide a system whereby each of the above contributes and where each receives a benefit. He spoke of the benefits for rural communities, landowners, and sportsmen. The target group would be landowners employing non-block management hunting without a fee. The program is not designed to compete with the existing BMP. Several benefits of the HHP were described, including: restoring a sense of community between all stakeholders; partnerships where neighbor works with neighbor for the benefit of all; and, an opportunity for "new nontraditional landowners" to become part of the community, etc. The

Potential next steps were identified, including: for the PL/PW or some other entity to put 'flesh on the bones' of the HHP; and formation of an Advisory Board to solicit, review and select proposals from counties. The program envisions grant money being donated by corporations, grants being awarded by the Advisory Council. The grants would be overseen by the county, and a county coordinator would be responsible for soliciting, enrolling and managing the program. A Conservation NGO would assume fiduciary responsibilities, including fundraising and distribution of grant money.

During Council discussion, one member recommended that more local contacts n be made regarding the program before a marketing plan is developed for it. Chris King, County Commissioner and member of the Council, said he is intrigued by the idea and thinks rural

counties might be interested since they are always looking for additional ways to fund more things. If the Council is interested, HHP can be considered for potential work in the future, once the Council has completed current work priorities.

AGENDA ITEM 5: PUBLIC COMMENT

- John Wilkinson, Rancher-outfitter from south of Miles City, said that many hunters want cow elk, so whatever can be done to help resident hunters get access to cow elk is important to do.
- Verna Henderson, Miles City resident, owned a ranch on the Tongue River and shared a personal story about the costs of access. They gave hunters permission for walk-in access to their ranch. Five parcels of state-land were landlocked by her property and this became a problem for them as hunters (particularly residents) felt it was their “right to access this public land any way they want.” They had various problems including a fire. Due to these things, they then stopped allowing hunting access. But even then, hunters continued to cross their land to access state land.
- J.W. Westman, Laurel Rod and Gun, provided written testimony.
- Herb Stoick, Laurel Rod and Gun, said that he appreciates the efforts of the PL/PW. Game harboring is a big issue. He suggested Hunter Days as a quantitative measure for FWP.
- Representative Bill McChesney, Miles City resident and Vice-Chair of the Environmental Quality Council, stressed that access is a huge issue from citizens’ perspectives. He commended the Council for its work and commended Gary Hammond for developing a new idea for expanding access.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05.

ALL MEETING FOLLOW-UP ITEMS AND TASKS

- The Access Roads Working Group will schedule a conference call to review and possibly refine Preliminary Recommendation #1 (Goal #1) at least 10 days before the August meeting.
- The Corner Crossing Working Group will schedule a conference call to revisit Preliminary Recommendation #2 (Goal #1) and consider the possibility of adding parameters at least 10 days before the August meeting.
- HB454 Working Group will review and refine the ratios established in Preliminary Recommendation #1 (Goal #3) at least 10 days before the August meeting.
- Home to Hunt License Recommendation, (currently includes Straw Dog Options 2a (OR0 2b) will be reviewed by the full Council prior to the August meeting, with a DRAFT Recommendation adopted at the August meeting.
- The Block Management Program will go on the PL/PW work docket for full Council consideration once the Goals and DRAFT Recommendations are adopted and sent out for public review and comment.
- Rod Bullis will seek information regarding the current status of the Montana Magistrate’s Association potential legislation regarding stronger penalties for Fish and Game violations.
- Alan will make sure that all Council members receive copies of the meeting handouts.